DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 375 238 UD 030 141

AUTHOR Austin, Susan; And Others
TITLE An External View of a State-Sponsored Urban School Improvement Initiative.
INSTITUTION Research for Better Schools, Inc., Philadelphia, Pa.
SPONS AGENCY Office of Educational Research and Improvement (ED), Washington, DC.
PUB DATE 1 Jun 89
NOTE 16p.; For related document, see UD 030 161.
PUB TYPE Reports - Evaluative/Feasibility (142)

EDRS PRICE MF01/PC01 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS Educational Change; *Educational Improvement; Educational Objectives; Educational Planning; Elementary Secondary Education; Expectation; Financial Support; *Local Issues; Long Range Planning; *School Restructuring; State Aid; *State Programs; Urban Education; *Urban Schools; Urban Youth
IDENTIFIERS Goal Based Planning; New Jersey; *Operation School Renewal NJ; Research for Better Schools Incorporated

ABSTRACT

This paper presents a set of general observations about state-sponsored school improvement initiatives with data from several sources. One major source is the Research for Better Schools, Inc., Philadelphia (Pennsylvania), implementation study, "Facing the Challenge: Selected Programs and Practices of the Urban Initiative's Operation School Renewal" that focused on New Jersey schools. Other sources include informal school-district contacts, analysis of district and school-improvement plans, and an analysis of a New Jersey Department of Education urban initiative called Operation School Reform (OSR). The first section of the paper defines and describes the key elements of OSR. The second section presents general observations and implications related to the planning process, program implementation, and the technical and financial assistance provided by the state. The final section provides a set of recommendations concerning the design and implementation of future state-sponsored urban school-improvement efforts. Recommendations can be grouped into the following sets: (1) negotiate expectations; (2) respond to local variability; and (3) provide funds according to plan. (Contains 2 references.) (SLD)

****
* Reproductions supplied by EDRS are the best that can be made *
* from the original document. *
****

ED 375 238

UD

AN EXTERNAL VIEW OF A STATE-SPONSORED URBAN SCHOOL IMPROVEMENT INITIATIVE

by

Susan Austin
Russell A. Dusewicz
Richard McCann

June 1, 1989

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
Office of Educational Research and Improvement
EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)

X This document has been reproduced as received from the person or organization originating it.

☐ Minor changes have been made to improve reproduction quality.

• Points of view or opinions stated in this document do not necessarily represent official OERI position or policy.

"PERMISSION TO REPRODUCE THIS MATERIAL HAS BEEN GRANTED BY
P.J. Donahoe
Research for Better Schools
TO THE EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)."

UD030411

Research for Better Schools, Inc.
444 North Third Street
Philadelphia, PA 19123
(215) 574-9300

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

The work upon which this publication is based was funded in part by the Office of Educational Research and Improvement, U.S. Department of Education. The opinions expressed do not necessarily reflect the position or policy of the Department, and no official endorsement should be inferred.

Copyright 1989: Research for Better Schools; all rights reserved.

Introduction

In order to address the critical problems faced by urban schools, the New Jersey State Department of Education (NJDE) joined with urban educators in launching a campaign to improve inner city schools. This "Urban Initiative" took the form of a comprehensive four-year effort to provide state assistance to urban schools through two program components. One of those components was called Operation School Renewal (OSR). OSR involved the provision of large annual grants to three urban districts in support of school improvement efforts directed at five pre-designated objective areas: improved attendance, increased achievement, reduced disruptive behavior, increased youth employment, and increased principal effectiveness. Participating districts engaged in a four-year process that included one planning year and three years of implementation.

Two years ago, Research for Better Schools, Inc. (RBS) was requested by the New Jersey Department of Education to assist in the evaluation of Operation School Renewal by providing technical assistance to NJDE project staff, and by documenting the development, of promising programs and practices within OSR. RBS identified 21 promising programs and practices from among the three districts and their 49 schools by two means: an analysis of state program monitoring information, district and school level goals-based plans, and by a consensus of state and district level administrators who identified these programs/practices as effective in helping achieve OSR objectives. A team of RBS staff and NJDE consultants collected data in selected school sites through interviews with a total of 147 teachers, students, administrators, and counselors and observations of teacher planning meetings and group discussions, as well as students engaged in program activities. The product of this effort was Facing the Challenge: Selected Programs and Practices of the Urban Initiative's Operation School Renewal (RBS, 1988).

This paper presents a set of general observations about state-sponsored school improvement initiatives. These observations are based upon several data sources. One major source is the RBS implementation study (see Facing the Challenge). Other sources of data include: informal district contacts, analysis of district and school improvement plans, and an analysis of a NJDE program audit of the three OSR districts. All of these data provide substantiation of the observations that follow. RBS hopes that this paper will assist state policymakers and leaders in planning and implementing a similar urban school improvement initiative.

There are three sections to the paper. The first defines and describes the key elements of OSR. The second section presents general observations and implications related to the planning process, program implementation, and the technical and financial assistance provided by the state. The final section presents a set of recommendations concerning the design and implementation of future state-sponsored urban school improvement efforts.

Defining the Key Elements of Operation School Renewal

An initial state planning document described the state's vision of the key elements of Operation School Renewal (NJDE, 1984). These elements included: (1) a set of design decisions, (2) a goal-based planning process, (3) technical assistance, and (4) financial assistance.

Design Decisions

The NJDE decided that the Urban Initiative was to be guided by current research on what was known about improving school environments and pupil achievement. State staff drew from research support for the following design decisions.

- The school was to be the primary focus for planning and implementation; there was to be substantial involvement of students, teachers, and administrators.
- The school principal was to be central to the planning and implementation process.
- Schools were to be accountable for meeting performance standards and expectations related to all students, irrespective of racial and/or socio-economic background.
- School change was to be considered a process, not an event; and significant change in a school requires at least 3-5 years.

Goal-Based Planning

Districts and schools were to develop long-range action plans. They were to be comprehensive, three-year plans addressing the five objectives: improved attendance, increased achievement, reduced disruptive behavior, increased principal effectiveness, and youth employment.

Technical Assistance

NJDE was to provide technical assistance to the OSR districts in two ways. The first was for the OSR director to provide workshops and to disseminate school improvement ideas. The second was to be through a School Renewal Team (SRT), headed by the Assistant Commissioner of Educational Programs, and composed of a cadre of state department division heads, higher education faculty, business and industry personnel, and other experts in the areas of research and evaluation, curriculum and instruction, and management. The team was to work collaboratively with the district in carrying out action plans. They also had at their disposal the expertise of staff from their division as well as resources from their division and from other NJDE units (e.g., expertise in finance and facilities, Chapter 2 discretionary funds for staff training, special grants from discretionary funds of vocational or bilingual education).

Financial Assistance

The state was to provide significant funds (e.g., from $655,000 to $1.3 million to each district in Year One) in support of district and school improvement efforts. These district funds were to continue through Years Two and Three. However, districts were to receive reduced financial support each year, based upon the assumption that districts would solicit their school boards for financial support of effective programs at an increasing rate each year. In addition, from these funds districts were to allocate small discretionary funds, ranging from $2-3,000, to individual schools in support of attendance and achievement programs and practices. Districts also were expected to establish organizational and fiscal structures to handle the flow of new funds.

Observations and Implications

RBS observations and suggested implications are organized around issues related to the planning process, program implementation, and the technical and financial assistance provided by the state.

Planning Process

An important concept of OSR was that both schools and districts were to engage in goal-based planning around the five program objectives listed earlier. RBS interviews and observations of the OSR programs concerning goal-based planning provide insight into the efficacy of this process.

Observation #1: In order for local planning efforts to be successful, staff responsible for carrying out the resultant plans must be involved in their development. OSR called for the establishment of school and district-level planning teams. The most successful efforts were those that used this structured process to engender meaningful participation and input from staff. In these cases, the active involvement of staff in developing plans for improvement activities they would ultimately implement provided a catalyst for generating the kind of staff motivation and commitment necessary for designing and carrying out workable plans.

Observation #2: Planning teams have difficulty addressing multiple objectives. New Jersey urban districts, like most urban districts, are frequently involved in multiple programs, each with their own set of objectives. OSR added another complex set of program objectives. Even though some of these OSR objectives were consistent with existing efforts, each objective required new plans to be developed. As a result, districts and schools felt as if they were being pulled in many directions.

Observation #3: Planning can be more meaningful when the state asks teams to address only those objectives that reflect district or school needs. Even though some districts already met state standards for an objective (e.g., student attendance), they were expected to plan for that objective. This requirement is an example of state inflexibility to local variability and needs, and contributed to frustration in the OSR districts and schools.

Observation #4: School planning efforts can be undercut by their districts. Even when schools developed workable plans to which they were strongly committed, districts sometimes interferred with this process. For example, in one district the locally-developed elementary school plans were rewritten by a central office administrator, so that they all were identical. Needless to say, this effort caught the principals and their staff by surprise, particularly when they were questioned by the state about the similarities in their plans, and severely undercut the schools' commitment to the program.

Implications. These observations support the importance and utility of a goal-based planning process for both schools and districts. However, they also suggest that state departments need to take into account the ongoing activities in urban districts and how additional large and complex programs, such as OSR, may confound current efforts. For example, each new program objective may require considerable additional planning and management. States need to consider having fewer planning objectives, or structuring their program so that districts and schools can select and intergrate objectives that are most closely related to their current needs and priorities.

Program Implementation

The interviews and observations of the OSR programs in operation provide insight into the efficacy of these efforts.

Observation #1: Successful implementation is most likely to occur when the activities address long-standing needs. Successful implementation efforts deliberately sought to focus on needs that were clearly apparent to staff. For example, long before the presence of OSR, one of the three districts was well aware of the need to establish a more systematic approach to collecting and monitoring attendance data. The OSR funds and the planning process provided an important impetus to the district to address this long prevailing need for an efficient and easily managed, centralized computer-based attendance system. The need for such a system was widely acknowledged throughout the district, a recognition that facilitated the cooperation of all schools with the district's efforts.

Observation #2: Successful implementation is most likely to occur when the activities address the needs of diverse constituents. District and school staff planned activities purposively to meet the needs of a variety of actors. For example, one district implemented a Home/School Community Worker program. This program met the needs of the teaching staff by providing them with support in addressing the problems of chronically absent students; the needs of administrators who were looking for ways to follow up on these students, but were lacking the needed time and energy; the needs of parents who appreciated the support and guidance; and the needs of students, who may have been missing school for reasons easily dealt with by a caring adult skilled at tapping into community resources. When the program was subsequently faced with budgetary cuts, there was a broad base of support for its continuation. In contrast, programs with a narrow constituent focus appeared less likely to be successfully implemented and ultimately supported for continuation by those constituents.

Observation #3: Successful school-level implementation is most likely to occur when activities open new channels of communication among key actors. Structures that promoted the exchange of ideas among a broad base of participants demonstrated promising, although perhaps unanticipated, outcomes. For example, one of the district-designed models for dealing with disruptive youth was an in-school adjustment center in several elementary schools. These centers provided an alternative classroom setting for disruptive youth who need a "time-out" from their regular classrooms and attention beyond normal classroom discipline. Teachers, administrators and paraprofessionals who met with center staff each month to discuss how the center could function to improve the educational climate of the whole school. These discussions were important not only for the committee members, but for the entire staff. Committee members had the opportunity to interact regularly on issues of school climate and to hear diverse perspectives. Their ideas were regularly considered at school faculty meetings. As a result, staff often made adjustments in procedures and developed more complex understandings of discipline-related issues. In this way, the committee process provided a new communication vehicle that subsequently impacted the entire school.

Observation #4: Successful implementation is more likely to occur when districts and schools perceive the time frame as realistic. Although participating urban districts "bought into" the notion that their students should be measured by the same set of standards as those set for all youth in the state, they felt that the OSR time frame for meeting these standards was too short. The three to five year time line, that had shrunk to two and a half full implementation years because of the slow start-up, made this state initiative look more and more like another a "quick fix" with little hope of any real potential for success.

Observation #5: Successful implementation is more likely to occur when district and state share common expectations about progress toward program goals and outcomes. Some districts believed that since OSR was to be complementary to the state monitoring process, some relief in expectations or timeline in meeting the minimum monitoring requirements would be realized as a result of participation in OSR. In fact, the state had originally envisioned OSR as a "concentrated effort that would complement the state's new approach to monitoring the educational programs of local school districts" (NJDE, 1984). They never envisioned a relaxation of the time frame in meeting monitoring standards. Some districts viewed their participation in the program as experimental, designed to test out the feasibility of a model of state supported assistance to urban schools. Since this was to be a "tryout," they felt less pressure, responsibility, and need for accountability in making the program work. However, the state came to view OSR as more than a "tryout" but as an actual attempt to fix some of the problems experienced by the districts as well as to help those districts meet the state's monitoring requirements. Thus, the state had no intention of relaxing the monitoring requirements, but felt that participation in OSR would help districts reach those requirements sooner than otherwise possible. Therefore, the pressure became even greater to meet the goals in the allotted time frame.

Implications. These observations about program implementation suggest that state departments can influence district and school change efforts by

playing a leadership role in several ways. First, state-initiated projects like OSR can be a powerful mechanism in stimulating districts and schools to engage in implementing long needed improvement strategies. Particular attention should be addressed to those strategies that address long standing needs, the needs of diverse constituents, and those that facilitate communication among key actors.

Second, despite what appears at the outset of such programs to be a generous timetable for school improvement, states need to consider providing adequate time for district and school planning, prior to program implementation especially in anticipation of unexpected delays. Time must also be set aside for the state department and the districts/schools to clarify their mutual expectations for program goals and outcomes. In addition, although it is important to assume that urban schools can achieve student performance and attendance standards similar to non-urban schools, three years appears to be a somewhat unrealistic time period. Three years, however, may be sufficient to demonstrate progress towards these standards and to project or forecast future progress, given adequate support and evaluation.

Technical Assistance

The state planned to provide collaborative assistance to the districts in designing plans and implementing activities, with the School Renewal Team (SRT) providing the bulk of that assistance. The team was expected to work collaboratively with the districts in planning, implementation, and securing external resources (financial and materials). The interviews and observations of school personnel provided insight into the efficacy of the state-provided technical assistance.

Observation #1: Although state-district collaboration can be a primary goal of state-provided technical assistance, such collaboration can be difficult to achieve. While it is possible that state departments may be able to provide collaborative assistance to districts, this concept did not work as originally envisioned. The state department was unable to implement the SRT, mostly due to the unrealistic expectation that high level individuals proposed for the SRT (e.g., department division heads, university faculty) would have sufficient time to meet the demands of a collaborative relationship with district and school staff. In addition, NJDE was ambivalent about assuming a collaborative role with districts and schools. State staff appeared to be more comfortable in a regulatory and monitoring role than in an assistance role of this kind. Thus, beyond some initial planning assistance, the SRT provided minimal collaborative support and technical assistance. Moreover, in spite of knowing that the SRT was not functioning, the state did not make any adjustments to compensate for this failing.

Observation #2: State-provided technical assistance requires sufficient support to match the realities of district and school needs. Districts also received less than expected technical assistance because of the inadequate number of state staff assigned direct responsibility for the program. One person was assigned to the role of state OSR coordinator with the expectation that he could provide substantive support to three urban districts and their 54 schools. Despite the valiant efforts of this individual, the task far

exceeded the resources of one person. If the SRT functioned as planned, the single OSR coordinator may have been sufficient. In light of the failing of the SRT, the state could have made adjustments by providing the coordinator with additional resources, given the district and school needs.

Observation #3: To increase project success, state technical assistance should anticipate and respond to local variability of districts, principals, and school staff. A great deal of variability in local capability in implementing OSR was observed. This variability was evident in the kind of leadership provided at both the district and school levels, the quality of the plans developed, the implementation of plans, and the degree of success experienced. Ironically, this local variability of capability and needs contrasts with the state's response to providing technical assistance. State technical assistance was characterized by lack of variability. Rather than providing state technical assistance that recognized the wide array of needs and differences in capacity of districts and schools, the state viewed technical assistance as meeting a generic need from which all principals or all districts could benefit. For example, state efforts to support principals took the form of an annual state-sponsored workshop for all OSR principals around a single central theme. Though appropriate for some, the workshop could not begin to address most principals' needs.

Observation #4: Relevant and targeted state-provided technical assistance requires a systematic feedback and monitoring system that provides the state with information about implementation efforts. During the second year of OSR, the state recognized the need for a systematic feedback and monitoring system that would provide them with current information about the status of district and school implementation efforts. As a result, the state designed a system that would provide them with information about fiscal expenditures and with a monthly computerized status report for each district. The system could have also been used in the identification of the specific technical assistance needs of the OSR districts. With the monitoring system in place, the coordinator could have easily identified and planned for technical assistance in high need program areas. For example, one such area that became apparent through the monitoring system was the need for the development of record keeping systems for meeting the attendance and disruptive behavior objectives.

Implications. These observations suggest that state departments consider the importance of designing the kind of school improvement assistance for districts and schools that provides realistic state support roles -- roles that state staff know they can meet. In addition, they need to consider the kind of assistance they believe to be appropriate for state staff to provide (e.g., regulatory, monitoring, guidelines, materials, staff development, on-site assistance). State departments are also advised to consider the double benefit of establishing an adequate program monitoring system early in the project's life. Not only can such a system keep them informed about the activity, it can also help them identify technical assistance needs.

State departments need to anticipate and respond to the reality that in any school improvement program there will be considerable diversity in local capacity to implement change. Some schools will be more ready than others to engage in significant change processes. In addition, there will be

considerable variability the array of implementation activities. States should design technical assistance that purposely allows for local adaptation, and that capitalizes on this responsiveness to variability as a way to gain local commitment and support for the improvement efforts.

Financial Assistance

By the end of the fourth year, the state had invested approximately 8.5 million dollars in this component of the Urban Initiative for both school and district level activities. The interviews and observations of school personnel revealed insights into how this money was used, managed, and monitored.

Observation #1: Districts have difficulty managing a large influx of funds. Some districts, because of planning or bureaucratic difficulties, could not spend the grant moneys given to them. They found themselves with large amounts of unexpended funds at the end of each year that needed to be renegotiated with the state. This situation came as a surprise to the state, and in part, served as a major reason for the state design of the program monitoring system. The unexpended funds created problems for both the districts and states. Districts had to return funds for which they had previously developed a program rationale. The state had to develop a system of accounting for returned funds.

To further complicate matters, the appreciable financial resources involved in OSR implementation helped to encourage a set of unrealistic public expectations for achievement of OSR goals, as exemplified in press accounts of the initiative. These high expectations turned to skepticism following the state's presentation of Year One and Two evaluation data that showed little progress towards the achievement of OSR objectives. Tensions between the district and state would have been greatly reduced if the state had planned for the possibility of districts not being able to use all funds allotted to them, and found ways to carry over unexpended funds into the following year.

Observation #2: The large influx of funds can serve to distort local capabilities and decisionmaking. With the weight of substantial dollars behind OSR came a new set of expectations and program priorities. Districts were often more concerned with developing programs that would use significant amounts of these funds, than designing programs that were considered essential to achieving their objectives. The large amount of funds created pressure to spend on short-term programs. For example, each district used a portion of funds to support activities directed at improving principal effectiveness. Although these funds were primarily used for inservice training and networking opportunities, one district decided to use substantial funds for a recognition dinner. In another district, in an effort to design a computerized attendance system, large sums of money were hastily invested in inappropriate and malfunctioning hardware and software, as well as in an automated calling system that frequently malfunctioned. With more limited resources, they may have arrived at different program decisions or made more cautious investments.

Observation #3: Those districts that incorporate sizable new program funds into existing organizational and fiscal structures are better able to manage those funds and resultant programs than those who create new organizational and fiscal structures. Each of the OSR districts handled the influx of dollars differently: either creating new organizational structures or weaving the money and program into current structures. For example, one district superintendent made the initial decision that OSR funds and program administration would become part of his district's current fiscal and organizational structure. Responsibility for each of the five objectives would be assigned to central office staff whose responsibility overlapped with the objective. The only new staff person added by the central office was the OSR director. The district's commitment to the program was demonstrated by the incorporation of the extra dollars into the departmental budget. When the extra money was gone, the departments understood that they then had the latitude to cut ineffective programs. This district anticipated that they would be able to continue leadership in effective OSR activities through a central office structure that would survive the cessation of OSR dollars.

By way of contrast, another district established separate organizational entities to manage various components of OSR. All were coordinated under a separate OSR program director. Since OSR program functions overlapped with a number of ongoing responsibilities of other offices within the district, there was bureaucratic "jealousy," "backbiting," and resistance. The outcomes were increased tensions and lack of support within those departments that traditionally had responsibility for these programmatic areas. As a result, many activities that were scheduled did not take place, and others had limited success. The state was in an excellent position to support a district decision to incorporate these new funds into existing organizationnal structures. Unfortunately, it did not anticipate that this strategy could contribute to minimizing disruption.

Observation #4: A small discretionary fund of $2-3,000 can provide a significant impetus in encouraging local school efforts. In many cases, the small $2-3,000 fund for a school's discretionary use to address the achievement and attendance objectives resulted in a large payoff, especially in generating staff excitement and interest in engaging in change efforts. For example, a few thousand dollars provided the motivation for staff in one elementary school to design an Academic Olympics that would reward students for their academic achievements. Because the money was there for prizes and awards, staff were freed to use their planning time to develop and implement a program to motivate students and increase their self-esteem. Staff were given an opportunity to take a chance and experience success, and they now believe that they have designed a program that has the potential to become a permanent fixture in the life of their school.

Observation #5: Districts may have difficulty obtaining local financial support to sustain effective programs and that difficulty compounds the perception of program success. The state funded OSR districts in such a way that they would receive reduced fiscal support with each year. The assumption was made that districts would solicit school boards for financial support of effective programs at an increasing rate each year. However, board support was sometimes difficult to obtain and promising new OSR

programs were curtailed. The loss of these programs was greatly compounded by the perception of school staff that their good-faith effort at renewal was merely another short-lived reform program.

Implications. These observations suggest that states should consider any array of fiscal issues before putting large amounts of dollars in needy urban districts. First, schools are often able to use small amounts of discretionary funds to a great advantage. Therefore, states should design ways to provide direct financial support at the school level.

Secondly, districts often had difficulty managing and using the large influx of funds. Where support to districts is involved, states should: negotiate with districts a flow of funds that fit local management capabilities and program plans; encourage districts to manage the funds through existing organizational structures; and help districts anticipate how they plan to cover the costs of their successful efforts into the district budget.

Recommendations to States

This paper presents an external view of a state-sponsored urban school improvement initiative. The observations and related implications are intended to benefit the design and implementation of future state-sponsored urban school improvement efforts. They can be summarized in three sets of recommendations.

Negotiate Expectations

To be successful, state-sponsored school improvement initiatives need to involve the state and districts in a negotiative process that develops shared commitment to a common set of expectations. Of particular importance are expectations about:

- goals
- how goal attainment will be monitored and assessed
- the processes that will be used to determine what changes in practice will be make and how they will be made
- the time frame for the initiative -- for example, by when plans can be completed, how long it will take to implement proposed changes in practice, and by when data should be available for determining whether the goals of the effort are being attained.

States can propose what such expectations should be; however, they will only become the expectations of district and school staff through a process of negotiation. States should not only to be open to negotiating expectations, but actively encourage such negotiations.

Respond to Local Variability

It is a truism that districts and schools differ greatly in their capacity to plan and implement significant improvement in educational practice. States frequently acknowledge this reality; however, they generally behave as though it does not exist. States need to recognize that the success of state-sponsored initiatives is highly dependent on their ability to help needy districts and schools develop those capabilities required for planning and undertaking a major improvement effort. States should design their initiatives, so that the nature and scope of their assistance is commensurate with the relative needs of the participating districts and schools.

Provide Funds According to Plan

States generally expect local districts and schools to use state funds for educational improvement activities according to the state's budget cycle -- that is, to expend state appropriated funds within a given state fiscal year. An alternative strategy would be for states to fund local educational improvement activities on the basis of multi-year plans that have been negotiated and that take into account districts' and schools' readiness to use additional resources for educational improvement purposes. Such a strategy would be responsive to local contextual factors and potentially avoid the kinds of problems observed in the New Jersey case -- for example,

- districts' inability to manage a significant influx of funds for use during a short time period
- districts' and schools' failure to expend significant amounts of the appropriated funds within a given fiscal year
- districts' and schools' use of funds for less than optimum purposes and in less of an effective manner
- districts' and schools' inability to sustain with local resources many of the new programs and services developed and supported by the temporary state funds.

Though some may argue that such a strategy is not politically feasible, there are examples of governmental programs that:

- allow some flexibility regarding the time period for the use of funds, either through legislative means (the law sets an expenditure time period different from the government's fiscal year) or administrative means (agreement to extend the time period for the use of funds)
- control the demand on resources by controlling the number of districts/schools entering the program in any given year, and thereby assure that the level of appropriation would be constant for the program, for its duration.

Building on such precedents, state leaders should be able to invent funding strategies that support systematic planning and implementation of improvements by local districts and schools.

REFERENCES

Research for Better Schools. (1988). Facing the challenge: Selected programs and practices of the Urban Initiative's Operation School Renewal. Philadelphia, PA: Author.

New Jersey State Department of Education. (1984). An urban initiative. Trenton, NJ: Author.